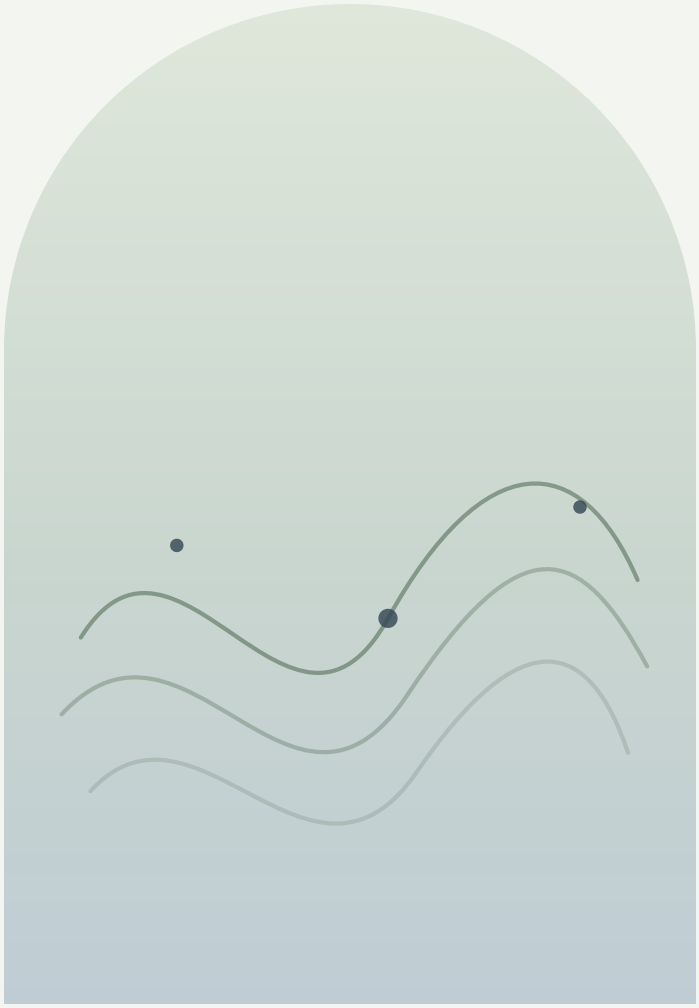


A FREE GUIDE FROM DANCE VISION FOUNDATION

Why Dance?

How dancing can support your balance, strength, memory and more

WELCOME

Moving to music is good for you. Here's why.

Dancing is one of the oldest ways people move together, and one of the most enjoyable ways to stay active. You hear the music, you move, and before long you forget you're exercising.

This guide gathers what researchers have learned about dancing and health, in plain language. For each topic you'll find what the studies say, why dancing seems to help, and one simple idea to try at home.

A note on the research: many dance studies focus on adults over 60, because staying steady and sharp matters more as we age. But moving to music isn't only for one age group. Our free classes welcome every adult.

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Please read: This guide is general information, not medical advice. If you have a health condition, have had a recent fall or surgery, or haven't been active in a while, check with your doctor before starting a new activity.

1 · BALANCE

Balance and steadiness on your feet

Dancing asks you to shift your weight, change direction and pause on one foot, again and again, in time with the beat. That's practice your balance can use.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

A 2015 review of studies with healthy older adults found that dancing can improve balance, muscle strength, flexibility and walking, which are all linked to the risk of falling.[1]

In an 18-month study of adults in their 60s and 70s, one group took dance classes and another did a standard fitness program. Both groups exercised, but only the dancers showed a clear improvement in balance.[2]

Why dancing helps

Dance steps train skills you rely on every day: stepping in different directions, steadying yourself after a turn, and knowing where your feet are without looking down. Doing it to music makes practice feel like play, so people tend to keep coming back.

Try this: the weight-shift sway

Stand at a kitchen counter with one hand resting on it. Put on a song you like. Slowly shift your weight onto your right foot, then your left, in time with the music. Keep your knees soft. After a week or two, try lifting the free heel slightly as you shift.

Always keep something sturdy within reach, and stop if you feel unsteady.

Strength, flexibility and a healthy heart

Dancing works your legs, hips and core, and gets your heart pumping, without feeling like a workout.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

A review of dance programs for older adults found improvements in muscle strength and endurance, balance and flexibility.[3]

A study combining health surveys of more than 48,000 adults aged 40 and older in England and Scotland found that people who danced at a moderate pace were less likely to die from heart disease than people who didn't dance.[4]

Studies like this show a link between dancing and better health. They don't prove dancing alone caused the difference.

Why dancing helps

Rising onto the balls of your feet, bending and straightening your knees, and holding good posture all build strength. Reaching, stepping and turning keep your joints moving through their full range. And a song or two at a steady pace gives your heart and lungs gentle, regular exercise.

Try this: rise and lower

Hold the counter with both hands. Rise slowly onto the balls of your feet for a count of two, then lower for a count of two. Repeat eight times, to music if you like. Rest, then do one more set if it feels good.

Keep both hands on the counter, and move slowly and smoothly.

Memory and focus

Remembering a sequence of steps, keeping time with the music and adjusting to the people around you gives your brain a real workout.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

A well-known study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* followed adults aged 75 and older for several years. People who danced often had a lower risk of developing dementia. Of all the physical activities in the study, dancing was the only one with that link.[5]

In the 18-month study on page 3, brain scans showed growth in the hippocampus, an area important for memory, in both the dance and fitness groups. The dancers showed growth in more areas.[2]

These studies are promising, but they don't prove that dancing prevents memory loss.

Why dancing helps

Learning something new asks your brain to build new connections. Dancing combines that learning with movement, rhythm and other people, all at the same time, which keeps your mind busy in a way few activities do.

Try this: a four-count pattern

Step to the right and bring your left foot to meet it. Step to the left and bring your right foot to meet it. Repeat until it feels easy, then add a clap each time your feet meet. Ready for more? Do two steps to each side before you clap.

Practice near a counter or wall, with plenty of clear space.

Mood and connection with others

Ask people what they love most about dance class, and many won't say the dancing. They'll say the people.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

A 2019 analysis that combined 41 studies found that dance reduced depression and anxiety and improved quality of life and well-being.[6]

When people dance in step with each other, they report feeling closer to one another. One study found that dancing in sync also raised people's tolerance for pain.[7]

Why dancing helps

Music lifts the mood. Moving together creates a sense of belonging. And a weekly class gives you somewhere to be, people who are glad to see you, and something to look forward to.

> "Where the body moves, the soul heals."
>
> Dance Vision Foundation

Try this: bring someone along

Invite a friend, neighbor or family member to try a free class with you. It's easier to walk in the first time together, and you'll have someone to laugh with afterward.

Getting started at any age

You don’t need experience, a partner or a certain level of fitness. You only need to show up.

1. **Start where you are.** Every move can be adapted, and the instructor will show you simpler versions.
2. **Go at your own pace.** Take breaks whenever you need to, and stop if anything hurts.
3. **Dress for comfort.** Wear clothes you can move in and flat, closed shoes with smooth soles that let you turn easily.
4. **Bring water** and sip it between songs.
5. **Talk to your doctor first** if you have a health condition, have had a recent fall or surgery, or haven’t been active in a while.
6. **Give it a few weeks.** Steps that feel strange the first time usually feel natural by the third or fourth class.

What happens at your first class

Arrive a few minutes early. Your instructor will welcome you and show you where to stand. Class starts with a gentle warm-up, then you’ll learn a few simple steps and put them together to music. Don’t worry about anyone watching. Everyone is busy with their own feet.

6 · FREE CLASSES

Join a free class

Dance Vision Foundation offers free, gentle movement classes for adults every week in Summerlin. Free to attend. Donations welcome, never required.

Save your free spot

Our classes and times change through the year. See this week's classes and sign up at **dancevisionfoundation.org**, or call **(888) 841-8465**. Our Foundation team will get back to you to welcome you to class.

Where: Dance Vision Studios, our partner venue, 9081 W Sahara Ave, Suite 190, Las Vegas, NV 89117

Prefer a seated class? Our Summerlin classes are standing classes. Call us to ask about Foundation chair classes at community locations nearby.

SOURCES

The research in this guide

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Not medical advice. This guide shares general information about dance and health. It is not a substitute for advice from your doctor. Research findings describe groups of people and may not apply to everyone.

About Dance Vision Foundation

Dance Vision Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit (EIN 81-3929117) that helps people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds improve their well-being through movement and dance. Classes are free for everyone who comes, made possible by community and donor support.

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